

Week 1 – Jude – Contending for the Faith – Bible Study Helps

Title: Contending for the Faith in the Last Days

Sermon Summary: This sermon introduces the book of Jude, emphasizing the urgent need for believers to earnestly contend for the faith as apostasy increases in the last days. The pastor explains that Jude wrote to warn early Christians about false teachers who had crept in unawares, turning God's grace into lasciviousness and leading people astray. The message has dual application—historically to early Jewish Christians and prophetically to tribulation saints. As we approach the rapture, believers must examine their lives for "weeds" of apostasy that the devil plants, stand firm in biblical truth, and actively defend the gospel of Jesus Christ. The sermon stresses that while we have blessed assurance through being sanctified, preserved, and called in Christ, we must remain vigilant against the great falling away happening all around us.

Key Points:

- The book of Jude contains only 25 verses but is packed with powerful truths about defending the faith
- Jude identifies himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, writing to believers who are sanctified, preserved, and called
- The theme verse is Jude 3: believers must "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"
- Certain ungodly men have crept in unawares, turning God's grace into an excuse for sinful living and denying Christ
- The book has dual application: to church age believers and prophetically to Jewish believers during the tribulation period
- Apostasy (falling away from the faith) is prophesied for the last days and is visibly increasing in our time
- Believers must examine their lives for "weeds" (influences, media, relationships) that the devil plants to lead them away from truth
- The greeting includes mercy, peace, and love (rather than Paul's typical grace, mercy, and peace), which may reflect the tribulation context
- Jude uses patterns of threes throughout the letter, reflecting God's trinitarian nature
- We must be valiant for truth like Nehemiah, who physically removed ungodly influences from God's house
- Tolerance for ungodly content and influences can gradually increase, making apostasy a danger even for genuine believers

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Scripture Reference:

- Jude 1-4 (primary focus)
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 (the falling away that precedes the day of Christ)
- Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (parable of the wheat and tares)
- Nehemiah 13:1-25 (Nehemiah's contending for righteousness)
- John 3:16 (everlasting life through belief in Christ)
- Romans 6:1 (shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?)
- Ephesians 2:20 (foundation of apostles and prophets)
- Revelation 6:9-11 (tribulation martyrs as servants)
- Revelation 19:9 (marriage supper of the Lamb)

Stories:

- The parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13), illustrating how the enemy sows false doctrine among true believers while people sleep
- Nehemiah's righteous anger when he discovered that a priest had given chamber space in God's temple to Tobiah, an enemy of God's work—Nehemiah physically threw out Tobiah's belongings and restored proper temple worship
- The illustration of receiving a neighbor's mail—while there may be profit in it, it wasn't written to you, emphasizing the importance of understanding who each biblical book was written to
- The analogy of preserved food in a sealed jar, illustrating how believers are preserved in Christ and will be just as fresh when opened at the rapture
- Personal testimony about tolerance for ungodly content gradually increasing over time, using the example of VCR tapes and how standards can slowly erode

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Discipleship Questions

How does understanding that we are 'sanctified, preserved, and called' by God provide assurance during times of spiritual uncertainty or when facing apostasy around us?

In what ways might we be tolerating 'weeds' or 'tares' in our own lives that the enemy has planted while we were spiritually asleep, and how can we identify and remove them?

What does it mean to 'earnestly contend for the faith' in our current cultural moment, and how might this look different than it did for first-century believers?

How can Nehemiah's bold response to corruption in God's house inform the way we address compromise and worldliness in our own churches and personal lives?

Why do you think Jude appeals to Old Testament history rather than just presenting new teaching, and what does this suggest about the importance of knowing biblical history?

What is the difference between God's grace in the church age and the mercy, peace, and love that tribulation saints will need, and why might this distinction matter?

How can we guard against the deception of false teachers who have 'crept in unawares' when they often appear credible and may even hold positions of spiritual authority?

In what ways might we be guilty of 'turning the grace of God into lasciviousness' by using forgiveness as an excuse to continue in sin?

What does it reveal about the seriousness of apostasy that even angels who were in God's presence chose to rebel, and how should this warning impact our daily walk with Christ?

How can we maintain a heart of repentance and self-examination while also boldly standing against false teaching and apostasy in the church?

Small Group Guide: Contending for the Faith

Based on Jude 1-4

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: When you hear the word "contend" or "fight," what comes to mind? Have you ever had to stand up for something you believed in? What was that like?

Sermon Overview

This study introduces the book of Jude, a powerful letter written to encourage believers to "earnestly contend for the faith." Jude warns about apostasy (falling away from the faith) and false teachers while reminding us of our security in Christ and our responsibility to stand firm in truth.

Key Takeaways

1. Our Identity in Christ (Jude 1-2)

- **Sanctified** - Set apart by God for His purposes
- **Preserved** - Sealed in Jesus Christ forever
- **Called** - God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light

2. Our Mission (Jude 3)

- To earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints
- To stand firm against false teaching and apostasy
- To be valiant for truth in a world falling away

3. The Danger (Jude 4)

- False teachers have crept in unaware
- They turn God's grace into license to sin
- Apostasy is happening all around us

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **What does it mean to be "sanctified," "preserved," and "called"?** How does this give you assurance about your salvation?
2. **Why did Jude change his plan from writing about "common salvation" to writing about contending for the faith?** What made this message urgent?
3. **What does it mean to "earnestly contend for the faith"?** What are some practical ways this looks in daily life?

Personal Reflection

4. **The sermon mentioned that we're living in a time of "great falling away."** What evidence of this do you see in the church, culture, or even in your own life?
5. **The parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13) was referenced.** What "weeds" (ungodly influences) might the enemy be planting in your life? How can you identify them?
6. **Nehemiah's response to discovering Tobiah's stuff in God's house was immediate and decisive.** Are there things in your life that need to be "cast out" like Nehemiah did? What holds you back from taking action?

Application

7. **The sermon challenged us to evaluate what we watch, read, listen to, and who we connect with.** Take a moment to honestly assess:
 - o Your media consumption (TV, movies, social media, music)
 - o Your relationships and influences
 - o Your daily habits and routines

What needs to change?

8. **How has your tolerance for ungodly things changed over time?** Have you become desensitized to things that used to bother you? Why is this dangerous?
9. **What does it mean to "stand for truth" in your workplace, family, or community?** Share a situation where you've had to (or should have) taken a stand.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge: The Life Inventory

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Take time this week to do a thorough "weed inspection" of your life:

Daily:

- Spend 15 minutes in God's Word each day (plant good seed!)
- Before consuming any media, ask: "Is this planting good seed or weeds?"

This Week:

- **Audit your influences:** Review your social media follows, subscriptions, and entertainment choices
- **Remove one "weed":** Identify and eliminate one ungodly influence from your life
- **Plant good seed:** Add one edifying resource (podcast, book, accountability relationship)

Action Steps:

1. Create a list of what you consume in a typical week (shows, websites, social media, etc.)
2. Evaluate each item: Does this draw me closer to God or further away?
3. Make one concrete change this week

Key Verses to Memorize

Jude 3 - "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

2 Thessalonians 2:3 - "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first..."

Prayer Focus

Pray for one another in these areas:

1. **Discernment** - To recognize false teaching and ungodly influences
 2. **Courage** - To stand firm for truth even when it's unpopular
 3. **Purity** - To remove weeds and plant good seed in our lives
 4. **Vigilance** - To guard our hearts against apostasy
 5. **Love** - To contend for truth with grace and compassion
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Additional Reflection Questions

For Deeper Study:

- Read 2 Peter 2 alongside Jude. What similarities do you notice about false teachers?
- How does understanding eternal security (being preserved in Christ) motivate you to holy living rather than license to sin?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us contend for the faith?

For Personal Journaling:

- If Jesus audited your life this week, what would He find? What would please Him? What would grieve Him?
 - Write a prayer confessing areas where you've been tolerating "weeds" and asking for God's help to remove them.
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Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that we are sanctified, preserved, and called. Help us to take seriously our responsibility to contend for the faith. Open our eyes to the weeds the enemy has planted in our lives. Give us courage to remove them and wisdom to plant good seed. Keep us from falling away. Help us to stand firm until Jesus comes. In His name, Amen.

For Next Week

- Read all of Jude (25 verses) at least twice
- Come prepared to discuss Old Testament examples of apostasy
- Be ready to share how you applied this week's challenge

5-Day Devotional: Contending for the Faith

Day 1: Preserved in Christ

Reading: Jude 1-2; John 10:27-30

Devotional: You are sanctified, preserved, and called. These three words form the foundation of your security in Christ. When God saved you, He didn't just start a work—He sealed it. You are preserved in Jesus Christ, wrapped in His righteousness, kept by His power. The world may rage, false teachers may arise, and your own heart may waver, but you cannot slip from His hand. This isn't permission for carelessness; it's the bedrock of confidence. Today, rest in this truth: the God who called you out of darkness is faithful to complete what He began. Your salvation doesn't depend on your grip on Him, but on His grip on you. Walk in the assurance that you are eternally secure.

Day 2: Earnestly Contending

Reading: Jude 3-4; Nehemiah 13:23-27

Devotional: Jude intended to write about salvation's joys, but the Spirit redirected him to sound an alarm. False teachers had crept in unaware, turning grace into license for sin. This wasn't theoretical—it was urgent. Like Nehemiah confronting compromise in God's house, we must take a stand. Earnestly contending doesn't mean being contentious, but being zealous for truth. It means refusing to let error go unchallenged in your own heart first, then in your sphere of influence. Examine what you're tolerating: What entertainment normalizes sin? What relationships pull you from Christ? What thoughts excuse disobedience? The great falling away begins with small compromises. Today, ask God to show you where you've grown comfortable with things that grieve Him. Contend for truth by first removing it from your own life.

Day 3: The Danger of Weeds

Reading: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

Devotional: While you sleep, the enemy sows. Jesus' parable reveals a sobering reality: wherever God plants good seed, Satan plants counterfeits. In your life, this happens constantly. Every godly input faces satanic opposition. Every truth learned battles a lie whispered. The great apostasy isn't just "out there"—it's a daily assault on your heart. Those seemingly harmless shows, that tolerance for worldly thinking, those small compromises—they're tares taking root. You cannot be passive. Evaluate everything: Does this draw me closer to Christ or subtly pull me away? Does this produce spiritual fruit or choke it? The falling away happens gradually, one weed at a time. Pull them while they're small. Guard your heart with vigilance. The harvest is coming.

Day 4: Remember History's Warnings

Reading: Jude 5-7; 1 Corinthians 10:1-12

Devotional: God saved Israel from Egypt, yet destroyed those who didn't believe. Angels in God's presence rebelled and now await judgment. Sodom and Gomorrah received fire for their sins. Jude stacks these warnings deliberately: apostasy isn't new, and judgment is certain. These aren't just historical footnotes—they're mirrors. The Israelites had seen God's power but still grumbled and turned away. The angels knew God's glory but chose rebellion. Sodom had warning but refused to repent. What makes you think you're immune? Your past faithfulness doesn't guarantee future perseverance. Your knowledge of truth doesn't protect you from deception. Only daily dependence on Christ keeps you standing. Let these warnings humble you. Let them drive you to prayer. Let them remind you that falling away is possible for anyone who stops watching.

Day 5: Keep Yourselves in God's Love

Reading: Jude 20-25; John 15:1-11

Devotional: After warning of apostasy, Jude gives the remedy: build yourself up in faith, pray in the Spirit, keep yourself in God's love, look for Christ's return. This is active, not passive. You don't drift into godliness; you fight for it. Building up requires feeding on God's Word daily. Praying in the Spirit means depending on Him, not your strength. Keeping yourself in God's love means abiding in Christ, remaining connected to the Vine. Looking for His return keeps your perspective eternal. These aren't suggestions—they're survival strategies for the great falling away. The world pulls you toward compromise; your flesh gravitates toward sin; the devil schemes your destruction. But God is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless. Trust His power, but use His means. To Him be glory both now and forever.